



The Caribbean Tourism Organization delivers a suitcase of smiles to Sonrisa

On Tuesday afternoon, Nancy de Carlo of Cloud Nine Travel in Philadelphia stopped by the Sonrisa Center in Pavilla to make a special delivery to their after school “clients.” Sonrisa is a foundation founded in 1990 by the parents of the mentally challenged that organizes events and activities as well as provides a support group for the parents. Nancy is a travel agent on the board of the Caribbean Tourism Organization, specifically the Tri Chapter out of Philadelphia, and during her visit to Aruba she participated in the program started by Patty Mitchell a few years ago called “Smiles in a Suitcase.”

Before her fact-finding visit to the island with her husband Mark, Nancy contacted the Aruba Tourism Authority (ATA) to inform them she would be bringing with her a suitcase full of toys, fun clothes and other objects to be donated to an appropriate group. Nancy explained that whenever the Tri Chapter CTO agents meet, they each bring with them a donation of something that they believe would be welcome by the children of the various islands that they visit. The agents inform Patty Mitchell whenever they will be traveling, and she puts together a collection of what would be age appropriate for whoever will be the recipients of their kindness.

When Nancy entered the Sonrisa building accompanied by ATA representative Francis Jacobs, she was greeted with a big hug by Jewel, one of the charges; something that every visitor has the good fortune to receive. It was an unexpected but delightful way to start the pleasant task of giving gifts to the group that range from ages eight to twenty-nine.

Sonrisa accommodates nine clients in their after school program, but there are approximately sixty in all that visit the center regularly, and Nancy left behind her suitcase so there will be plenty of smiles for those that could not be there that day.

Angelique Perez, Director of the center expressed her gratitude for the generosity of the CTO agents, and their thoughtfulness in wanting to be positively and productively involved with the destinations they visit. Nancy revealed that there would be more agents visiting in the future, and with each visit, the plan that other foundations that assist children will also be recipients of the “Smiles in a Suitcase” program.